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## When you should and shouldn't worry during your pregnancy

Often seen as a time of bump-patting, nursery-decorating and eager anticipation, pregnancy can also be fraught with worries. Most women, particularly during their first pregnancy, experience unexpected symptoms, and may find it hard to know when to seek help.

Whilst any concerns should always be raised with your healthcare provider, we've compiled a list of common symptoms and consulted the experts about possible causes.

### Pain

From headaches to [haemorrhoids](#), pregnancy can cause a range of unwelcome aches and pains. But what about when we experience pain around our bump?

#### Common causes

'It's not unusual to get some stiffness or achiness around the pelvis as your tendons and ligaments get wider and the baby gets heavier,' explains midwife Liz Halliday. 'But if you find you have difficulty walking, or experience a sudden onset of pain, it's important to get checked out.'

Women also experience 'round ligament pain' caused by ligaments on either side of the uterus stretching to accommodate their growing bump. These are 'occasional spasm-like pains that are uncomfortable but generally harmless,' explains Darcey Croft, delivery suite midwife at [Northwick Park Hospital](#), London.

'However, if it doesn't resolve upon moving or you feel concerned, it is always best to get it checked out.'

#### Warning signs

Any sudden onset of pain, or abdominal pain, should always be checked out, as it may be a cause for concern. In addition: 'If you have a blinding headache, flashing lights or blurred vision, a pain in the upper right hand of your abdomen or any of these symptoms from 20 weeks onward you should request an urgent review by your midwife or obstetrician,' adds Croft.

## Dizziness

Being forced to carry around extra weight on our front would be enough to make most of us feel a little light-headed from time to time.' But how worried should we be about feeling a little dizzy?

### Common causes

'The most common causes of [dizziness](#) in pregnancy are low blood sugar or dehydration,' explains Halliday. 'If a woman complains of dizziness, and realises she hasn't eaten breakfast, for example, I'd advise her to eat and see if the problem resolves.'

### Warning signs

However, if the problem continues or she actually faints, it's best to contact a doctor or midwife, as it can be a sign of other conditions, such as [anaemia](#).'

## Discharge

Another unexpected side-effect of pregnancy is the feeling that your knickers are constantly wet. But might it be a membrane rupture, or could it have a more innocent explanation?

### Common causes

Vaginal discharge often increases during pregnancy, due to increased blood flow to the uterus. [Thrush](#), a yeast infection common in pregnancy, may also cause unusual discharge, as can [sexually transmitted infections](#).

In addition, some women can experience [urinary incontinence](#), particularly in the later stages of pregnancy.

### Warning signs

'If it's sudden onset – suddenly your knickers are wet – it could be a sign of your waters breaking,' says Halliday. 'If you're not sure, pop a pad on for a couple of hours – and if the pad is wet, proceed to hospital.'

Women should also head to their local care provider if 'bleeding, an odd colour or loss of movement' is detected.

## Contractions

Feeling your bump tighten can be a nerve-wracking experience. Could it be [premature labour](#)? Or might there be another explanation?

### Common causes

Most women are familiar with the term Braxton Hicks – painless tightening of your bump that become more frequent towards the end of your pregnancy. But how do we distinguish between these and contractions?

'Braxton Hicks are usually painless,' explains Halliday; 'they shouldn't be accompanied by menstrual-type cramp or back pain.'

### Warning signs

If they are feeling sore or have any sort of regularity, and you are not yet 37 weeks, you need to get checked out. Often, if you are experiencing contractions, they will settle down, but it's important to go in to be monitored.'

'If your pregnancy is full-term (37-42 weeks), go home, eat and drink and wait for [labour](#) to start.'

## Bleeding

There's nothing that makes the heart race more than passing blood during pregnancy. Whilst all bleeding should always be checked out, it's reassuring to know that there can be many different causes – and the problem is not necessarily pathological.

### Common causes

During pregnancy, 'bleeding can come from the vaginal wall or the skin on the cervix.' Sometimes we never know where it came from, everything's fine and it resolves on its own,' explains Halliday.

## Warning signs

'Bleeding in pregnancy is never normal, so you should always get a bleed checked out. Sometimes it can be from the placenta or signal another problem with your pregnancy. Even with a small amount it's worth popping into hospital to check everything is OK.'

## Movement

Most women eagerly anticipate the first flutters – the time the first movements are picked up, which usually occur within 18–22 weeks (and sometimes earlier). Later, a well-targeted kick in the ribs can feel a little less welcome.

But what about when we don't feel as much movement as we feel we should?

### Common causes

Some women mistake the romantic first flutters for a slightly less appealing dose of [trapped wind](#). Alternatively, if your placenta is positioned at the front of the uterus, it may just be that the baby is kicking here and you are unable to feel it.

Later in pregnancy, movements may feel different as the baby struggles more to find the room for manoeuvre.

### Warning signs

'If you haven't yet felt the baby move and you're about 20–22 weeks, it's a good idea to find out why,' says Halliday.

Later in pregnancy, if you notice that movements have decreased, it's important to contact your healthcare provider.

'In addition, a period of excessive movement may also indicate that your baby is in distress, so you need to get that checked out too,' adds Halliday.

## In doubt? Get checked out

Despite knowing there could be common causes for worrying symptoms, it's always better to seek medical advice if something doesn't feel right. Midwives and doctors understand the stresses that women feel during pregnancy and will be happy to provide reassurance.

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